STRIVING IN THE PATH OF GOD

Jihād and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought

ASMA AFSARUDDIN

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OXFORD
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Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
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Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
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Published in the United States of America by
Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Afsaruddin, Asma, 1958-
Striving in the path of God : jihād and martyrdom in Islamic thought / Asma Afsaruddin.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978–0–19–973093–3 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Jihad. 2. Religious life – Islam. 3. Martyrdom – Islam. I. Title.
BP182.A34 2013
297.7'2 – dc23
2012037220
ISBN 978–0–19–973093–3

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

To my mother, Maleka Khatun, for all that I owe her

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Acknowledgments

FIRST AND FOREMOST, I acknowledge with gratitude the research grant awarded to me by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation that allowed me to go on sabbatical leave during 2003–2004, when I began the initial research for this monograph. Profound gratitude is also owed in particular to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for a very generous grant that funded another sabbatical year (2006–2007), during which period the research for this project was completed and the bulk of the writing accomplished. I also thank the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts and the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, both at the University of Notre Dame, for awarding me grants in the summers of 2003 and 2008 to carry out additional research for this project.

The comments and feedback provided by several colleagues at various stages have been invaluable. I gratefully acknowledge their generosity with their time and am indebted to the following (in alphabetical order) for their careful reading of all or parts of the manuscript: Jonathan Brockopp, Wael Hallaq, Louise Marlow, and David Marshall. Over the years, I have benefited from my conversations on *jihād* and related matters with a number of friends and colleagues: Harifyyah 'Abd al-Haleem, Muhammad Abu Nimer, Waleed al-Ansary, Mahmoud Ayoub, Karim Crow, Maria Dakake, Sohail Hashmi, Qamar-ul Huda, James Turner Johnson, Ibrahim Kalin, John Kelsay, Muqtedar Khan, Joseph Lumbard, Stephen Sizer, James Sterba, and Brian Wicker. Portions of this manuscript at various stages were presented at various colloquia and invited lectures. My thanks to all those who provided feedback and comments at these gatherings sponsored by the University of Edinburgh, Mt. Holyoke College, George Mason University, Georgetown University, the United States Institute of Peace, the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces, the Carnegie Corporation, Columbia University, Indiana University, Lund University, Sweden; Birkbeck College, London; Goettingen University, Germany; School of Oriental and African Studies, London; University of Leeds, England; and Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University.

My thanks are further due to two of my former undergraduate research assistants at the University of Notre Dame, Laura Meyer and Kendall Hannon, who helped me compile the bibliography for this book. I also owe a considerable debt of gratitude to my current graduate research assistant at Indiana University, Michael Bevers, who meticulously proofread the entire manuscript and painstakingly prepared the index. My thanks also go to the library staff at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana University, the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, and the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford University for helping me gain access to necessary materials, both published and unpublished.

The editor at Oxford University Press, Cynthia Read, was an expert and cheerful guide from start to finish, and her efficient staff members were most helpful during the production stage. It was a delight to work with them, and I remain most grateful for their gracious assistance throughout the complex process of finalizing the manuscript for publication.

I would be gravely remiss if I did not acknowledge all the students in my class "War and Peace in the Islamic Tradition," which was taught at Indiana University in fall 2010 and fall 2011. Their lively engagement with the near-final version of the manuscript prompted me to clarify and fine-tune some of the material. I thank the following graduate students in particular for useful discussions beyond the classroom during the last three years: Christopher Anzalone, Michael Bevers, and Kevin Arif Meskill.

I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge the moral support of my family—especially my mother, Maleka Khatun, whose love for learning and commitment to integrity at all levels have considerably shaped my own worldview. I dedicate this book to her in profound acknowledgment of her influence in my life. My sisters, Najma Hasib and Salma Hassan, constantly egged me on toward the finishing line.

Finally, as always, I remain indebted to my husband, Steve Vinson, without whose unflagging championship and constant encouragement this project could not have been accomplished. Despite his own hectic schedule, he took the time to read through the manuscript and saved me from a number of infelicities. Needless to say, any remaining mistakes are mine alone.

Striving in the Path of God

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Introduction

MODERN ACADEMIC TREATMENTS of *jihād* almost invariably focus on the legal dimensions of this concept and hence emphasize its military signification. Such discussions mostly draw upon the extensive pre-modern Islamic juridical literature for explicating the semantic and legal parameters of the term.[1] Comprehensive surveys of broader, multiple inflections of the concept in other non-legal genres and corpora are far less common.[2] In both popular and scholarly literature, *jihād* is primarily assumed to be a monovalent concept referring to "military/armed combat," as became the predominant meaning in juridical and administrative literature by the second/eighth century. This assumption facilitates the discussion of *jihād* as a term with a nearly fixed, universal meaning divorced from the varying sociopolitical contexts in which it has been deployed through time. Recent scholarship has continued to replicate these discussions, but now usually with an added study of the violent movements that invoke *jihād* in the contemporary period.

In contradistinction to this approach, this monograph seeks to study in a more holistic manner the changing significations of *jihād* from the earliest formative period of Islam to the contemporary period, against the background of specific historical and political circumstances that have mediated the meanings of this critical term. This larger objective has entailed canvassing a more varied genre of texts—a discussion of which occurs below—to recreate a more multifaceted understanding of *jihād* as a dynamic discursive term throughout time.

Linked to *jihād* is the socio-legal concept of "martyrdom." Martyrdom, in particularly its military sense, came to be signified by the Arabic term *shahāda* by the second/eighth century. The plurality of meanings associated with *jihād* in early and especially non-legal literature is complemented by early multiple conceptualizations of martyrdom. Both concepts would subsequently become considerably circumscribed in meaning. To retrieve the semantic trajectory of these two concepts, particularly from the first three

centuries of Islam, we have to consult diverse relevant sources. First on the list of these sources, of course, is the Qur'ān and early commentaries on it, followed by early *ḥadīth* compilations predating the better-known authoritative *ḥadīth* collections from the third/ninth century on and early treatises on the excellences of *jihād*.

The Qur'ān—the earliest recorded text we have dating from the first century of Islam—is the point of departure for the treatment of the first diverse inflections of the concepts of *jihād* and martyrdom in the Islamic milieu.[3] The Qur'ān preserves in particular a semantic spectrum for the term *jihād* and its derivatives that progressively came to be either downplayed or elided in much of the later literature. In the Qur'ān, derivatives from the root *jhd* (usually occurring as verbal forms) have the basic signification of "struggling," "striving," and "exertion." The lexeme *jihād* occurs only twice in the Qur'ān. In extra-Qur'anic literature, *jihād,* usually with the definite article *al-* is frequently conjoined to the phrase "*fī sabīl allāh*" (lit. "in the path of God"); the full locution in Arabic—*al-jihād fī sabīl allāh*—then yields the meaning of "struggling/striving for the sake of God." This translation points to the polysemy of the term *jihād* and the potentially different meanings that may be ascribed to it in different contexts, because the phrase "in the path of/for the sake of God" allows for human striving to be accomplished in multiple ways.

Two other Qur'anic terms are of relevance here: *Qitāl* is the term used in the Qur'ān to specifically refer to "fighting" or "armed combat" and is a component of *jihād* in specific situations. *Ḥarb* is the Arabic word for "war" in general. The Qur'ān employs this last term four times: to refer to illegitimate wars fought by those who wish to spread corruption on earth (5:64); to the thick of battle between believers and nonbelievers (8:57; 47:4); and, in one instance, to the possibility of war waged by God and His prophet against those who would continue to practice usury (2:279).[4] This term is never used with the phrase "in the path of God" and has no bearing on the concept of *jihād*.[5]

There is yet a fourth Qur'anic term that I argue has a direct bearing on *jihād*, although it has not received due attention as such in most academic literature. This term is *ṣabr*, referring to the attributes of "patience," "forbearance," and "steadfastness," and which we, for the most part, translate as "patient forbearance." In Qur'anic discourse, *ṣabr* is a stable component and manifestation of the striving of the righteous; quietist and activist resistance to wrongdoing is equally valorized in a number of verses. For example, one Qur'anic verse (16:110) states: "As for those who after persecution fled their homes and strove actively (*jāhadū*) and were patient (*ṣabarū*) to the last, your Lord will be forgiving and merciful to them on the day when every soul will come pleading for itself." Another (Qur'ān 47:31) states: "We shall put you to

the test until We know the active strivers (*al-mujāhidīn*) and the quietly forbearing (*al-ṣābirīn*) among you."

The Qur'anic conjoining of derivatives from *jhd* and *ṣbr* in several verses is highly significant but has barely been noted in most modern, particularly Western, academic treatments of *jihād*. The principal reason for this is that most modern discussions of this concept have typically focused on Muslim juridical discussions of *jihād* as an important duty within the context of state security and international relations, mainly in the Arabic legal genre known as *siyar*. As a consequence, the reduction by jurists of *jihād* to primarily one, albeit important, component of it—*qitāl* or fighting—receives undue emphasis in these modern academic works.[6] In contradistinction to this approach, pre-modern Muslim edifying literature concerned with "striving in the path of God" in various aspects of life beyond the arena of international politics often dealt with *ṣabr* as an essential ingredient of *jihād*, broadly understood as the overall human struggle on earth. A number of modern and contemporary works (twentieth century to the present time) have started to place a renewed, greater emphasis on *ṣabr* as the most important Qur'anic component of *jihād* that particularly conduces to principled nonviolence, as we discuss in chapter 9.

The progressive juridical—as well as exegetical—conflation of *jihād* with *qitāl* that occurred in the pre-modern period (and continued into the modern period)[7] is reflected in the way martyrdom also came to be progressively understood in similar contexts as essentially dying on the battlefield. The Qur'ān, early *ḥadīth* works, and early exegetical literature provide important correctives to this later, reductive view. It is highly significant that the Qur'ān does not have a single word for "martyr" or "martyrdom"—two concepts that are assumed to be intrinsically linked to the concept of *jihād* as armed combat against external enemies. The common Arabic word for martyr became *shahīd*. It is telling that nowhere in the Qur'ān is this lexeme used for a martyr; rather it is only used, interchangeably with *shāhid*, to refer to a legal witness or an eyewitness. Its plural *shuhadā'* is similarly used in reference to legal or eyewitnesses. Only in later extra-Qur'anic sources does *shahīd* (and its plural *shuhadā'*) acquire the specific meaning of "one who bears witness for the faith," particularly by laying down his (or her) life.

The Qur'ān, however, does express a high regard for those among the faithful who die in the service of Islam, particularly in its military defense. One of the Qur'anic verses (3:169—cf. also 47:4; 2:154) that has been construed to refer to the special status of the military martyr states: "Do not think that those who were slain in the path of God are dead. Rather they are alive and well provided for by their Lord." Early exegetical and *ḥadīth* works make clear, however, that the phrase "slain in the path of God" was not understood as an

exclusive reference to those who fall in battle only, but could be glossed in several ways. For example, the early *ḥadīth* work *al-Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827), which was compiled earlier than the authoritative *ḥadīth* collection of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), contains a number of reports that relate multiple combative and non-combative definitions of martyrdom that are not always reproduced in later compilations.[8]

The comparison and interrogation of a larger variety of sources—the Qur'ān, early and later *ḥadīth* compilations, and exegetical and ethical/edifying literature—lead to the conclusion that the progressive formulation of fairly monolithic classical juridical views of *jihād* and martyrdom owes considerable impetus to the rise and consolidation of the imperial Umayyad and ʿAbbasid states and the establishment of a strong military during these periods. This is reflected in the way that some jurists working in the heartlands of Syria and Iraq, such as Makḥūl al-Dimashqī (d. between 112/730–119/737) in the second/eighth century and al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) in the third/ninth century, were often willing to defer to *Realpolitik* and interpret the military purview of *jihād* in ways that were at times downright contradictory to Qur'anic injunctions—for example, in their endorsement of the military *jihād* as an obligatory duty for all and as offensive combat. Arguably, support for statist policies of territorial expansion provided the impetus, at least partially, for this interpretive and legal proclivity. Other authorities, like Abū Salāma b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. between 94/712–104/722), and Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777), not known to be close to the ruling elites of their time, would endorse only a defensive *jihad* in response to a prior act of aggression by enemy forces and did not regard the combative *jihād* to be a religious obligation. The nexus between the rise of the Umayyad and ʿAbbasid states and their imperial objectives, the consolidation of a powerful class of religious scholars, and the classical narratives of *jihād* as military combat are among the intriguing issues that we attempt to explore in this study.

Without doubt, the historical reality was complex; master narratives woven together by official chroniclers and men of religion were contested and sometimes rewritten, usually on the margins of society. Counterposed to the predominant and better-known juridical and statist narratives of *jihād* was also what I call the "dissenting literature," produced by amorphous groups that appear to have challenged the exclusively militarist interpretations of *jihād* and martyrdom. As some sources indicate, these alternate voices belonged to certain pietist individuals and groups in the early period, who appear to express their dismay in these narratives at the perceived self-aggrandizing, materialistic motivations for *jihād* on the part of the administrative-military establishment. These alternate voices are occasionally embedded in early *ḥadīth* works,

such as the aforementioned *al-Musannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʾānī, and in didactic/edifying/hortatory works written in praise of patient forbearance (Ar *faḍāʾil al- ṣabr*), as part of the prolific *faḍāʾil* literary genre, such as the one by Ibn Abī ʾl-Dunyā (d. 281/894) discussed in chapter 7. A number of reports included in such early works clearly contest reports in later *ḥadīth* collections that assign the highest merit to military martyrs. Taken together, the existence of these two parallel strands in the *ḥadīth* and edifying literature testify to competing discourses on modalities of piety and the construction of moral excellence, particularly in the early centuries of Islam. Proceeding from this premise, part of this study goes on to contextualize the evolution of this didactic and hortatory literature: to explore why and when these particular types of *faḍāʾil* works were being produced and to attempt to identify the probable external influences shaping the broader contours of this discourse.[9]

Thesis and Plan

The main thesis of this study is that the conceptualizations of *jihād* as *primarily* armed combat and of *shahāda* as *primarily* military martyrdom are relatively late and contested ones, and deviate considerably from the Qurʾanic significations of these terms. A comprehensive interrogation of variegated early and late sources belonging to the genres identified above allows valuable evidence to be adduced in favor of early and competing multiple definitions of "striving in the path of God." By diachronically tracing the discourse on *jihād* through a close examination of the contents of these primary sources, this work aims to conclusively establish the change in the trajectory of meanings assigned to this term and its correlate *shahīd* over time, linking the narrowing of the semantic purview of these terms to specific sociopolitical circumstances—insofar as it is possible for us to reconstruct them. This linkage will occasionally be further anchored through a critical examination of the chains of transmission (*isnād*) of frequently cited reports in the earlier and later exegetical and *ḥadīth*, including *faḍāʾil*, works pertaining to *jihād* and martyrdom. Close scrutiny of the chains of transmission of certain significant reports occurring in these literatures allows us to focus on the principal and recurrent narrators of such reports and to reflect on what that might tell us about the possible provenance of these statements, the probable time of their propagation, and the likely ideological motivations of the narrators. Through the diachronic study of the different sources identified above, we seek to retrieve early multivalent connotations of the terms *jihād* and *shahīd* in the formative period and to contextualize the competing discourses that crystallized around these terms through the centuries.

This book consists of nine chapters in addition to this introduction, followed by a conclusion. Chapter 1 discusses the non-combative dimensions of the Qur'anic concepts of *jihād* and *ṣabr* from the middle-Meccan to the early Medinan period through the prism of selected pre-modern Sunnī, Shī'ī, and Ibāḍī exegetical works from the Umayyad through the Mamluk periods. Modern exegetical discussions of *jihād* are deferred to later chapters.

Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the Qur'anic imperative of *qitāl* (fighting) introduced in the Medinan period as an important component of *jihād* in specific circumstances and subject to certain conditions. The focus in these chapters, as in chapter 1, is on the retrieval of multiple and contested understandings of this conditional religious obligation through a diachronic survey of exegeses of key, relevant verses. Chapter 4 discusses the concept of martyrdom in the Qur'ān as primarily adumbrated in the ambiguous and multivalent phrase *man qutila fī sabīl allāh* ("those who are slain in the path of God") and its variants, once again through a diachronic survey of the exegeses of key verses containing a version of this locution. One verse (Qur'ān 4:74) that refers to bartering one's life in this world for life in the next is also discussed. Chapter 5 scrutinizes the *faḍā'il al-jihād* reports contained in the early *ḥadīth* works, including the early *Muṣannaf* works of the previously mentioned 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) and Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849) and the six authoritative Sunni *ḥadīth* compilations. Chapter 6 discusses and compares early *faḍā'il al-jihād* treatises, such as the *Kitāb al- jihād* of 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) with later *faḍa'il al-jihād* works (roughly after the fourth/tenth century), such as the *Mashārī' al-ashwāq ilā maṣārī' al-'ushshāq* of Ibn al-Naḥḥās (d. 814/1411). An extensive comparison of these treatises enables us to map the semantic landscape forming around *jihād* and related terms, as reflected in this primarily *ḥadīth*-based discourse, and permits the establishment of a repertoire of meanings assigned to these terms and their sociopolitical/legal implications in different historical contexts. In both chapters 5 and 6, the chains of transmission of a number of critical reports are scrutinized in order to single out their most prolific narrators and dwell on their status as *ḥadīth* transmitters, thereby allowing us in some cases to speculate on the probable motivations for the propagation of these reports and assess their reliability. Chapter 7 focuses on literature that extols the merits of patient forbearance (*ṣabr*), which includes mainly Qur'ān commentaries and individual treatises on this topic. To what extent this emphasis on the inculcation of *ṣabr* mitigates and challenges the predominantly statist/military conceptualizations of *jihād* is explored. Once again, we resort to selective scrutiny of the chains of transmission of a number of these reports in praise of *ṣabr* to determine their probable provenance and the possible ideological motivations of their transmitters.

Chapter 8 discusses modern and contemporary discourses on *jihād* by some of the better-known proponents of political Islam in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also analyzes the discourses of radical militants, especially after September 11, 2001, some of whom have adopted suicide bombing as a manifestation of (in their view) legitimate martyrdom. We examine the Islamicizing rhetoric of these militants and discuss how they use and misuse classical and later sources to grant religious legitimacy to their violent enterprises. Chapter 9 focuses on the views of a different set of modern and contemporary religious scholars and intellectuals on the topics of *jihād* and martyrdom, who typically emphasize the historical polysemy of these concepts. These scholars have been adamantly critical of militant projects and the application of the term *jihād* to them. Needless to say, such criticism has intensified in certain quarters after September 11, and a number of key works composed after this period are discussed. The conclusion provides a summary of our findings and assesses how, and why scholars in the classical and medieval periods—particularly exegetes and *ḥadīth* specialists—increasingly chose to privilege a monovalent, combative understanding of *jihād* roughly from the late second/eighth century on, instigating counter-narratives from a pietist segment that foregrounded and praised its non-militant aspects. The historical and political motivations propelling these developments are reconstructed as far as the literature allows us and how this approach broadens and nuances current perspectives on *jihād* and martyrdom is indicated.

The Significance of a Diachronic Survey of Qur'ān Commentaries and Other Texts

As should have become evident from the discussion of sources above, Qur'ān commentaries form an important and integral part of the sources consulted for our project of reconstruction and analysis of construals of *jihād* through the centuries. The historian of Islam Roy Mottahedeh has pointed to the invaluable nature of *tafsīr* works in reconstructing the major theological, intellectual, social, and political concerns of the pre-modern Islamic past.[10] As he rightly emphasizes, the continuous nature of this genre from the earliest centuries of Islam through some of the most productive and tumultuous periods of Islamic history render it an unparalleled repository of formative ideas and perspectives, some of which were either attenuated or completely lost in later centuries. This is certainly borne out in our study of exegetical works in reference to key Qur'anic verses dealing with *jihād* and its derivatives.

At the risk of being repetitive, we decided to provide the relevant views of individual commentators on specific verses, often in great detail. Because the

emphasis in this work is on diachronic shifts in the formulations of *jihād* at the level of micro-discourses, staying as close as possible to the reported views of the exegetes allows us to more vigilantly monitor subtle changes in nuance and semantics over time. The reader may find that this occasionally makes for dense reading, but given the importance of the textual evidence, this detailed attention at the micro-level to the specific vocabulary and perspectives of influential commentators was deemed important and necessary.

We also decided not to provide lengthy conclusory paragraphs for each chapter, but rather to postpone the summation and analysis of the textual material presented to the final concluding chapter. This further allows the conclusion to be read as a stand-alone section providing a detailed overview of the major points that emerged in the preceding chapters.

In regard to Qur'anic verses, we have adopted the common and conventional periodization of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, particularly the broad temporal division of the Meccan and Medinan periods, as occurs in the usual historical and biographical sources. This periodization was adopted by the early biographers Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/767) and Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833) in their famous *sīra* of the Prophet and by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) in his magisterial universal history *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-'l-mulūk*, among others, and remains the conventional historical chronology adopted in modern works. With regard to the classification of Qur'anic chapters as Meccan and Medinan, we have also followed the traditional dating of the *sūra*s, as followed by the editors of the standard 1924 Cairo edition of the Qur'ān. The traditional dating remains the one generally adopted in modern scholarship.[11]

The comparison of early and late sources and texts is *the* key feature of our study, which seeks to thereby chart both the constancies and changes in the spectrum of meanings and repertoire of activities included under the term *jihād* and the broad rubric of martyrdom. In addition to Qur'ān exegeses, this study compares and contrasts early and late works of *ḥadīth* and the excellences of *jihād* literature. One major genre not covered here is the juridical one—precisely because we wish to emphasize the more diverse, non-legal significations of *jihād* and martyrdom that emerge in other literary corpora. Historical chronicles are also not much in evidence here. Both the legal and historical literatures have received ample scholarly attention in relation to *jihād*. The focus on exegetical works, early *ḥadīth*, and edifying literature in this study is meant to compensate for the scant attention they have received to date in discussions of *jihād* and martyrdom. The diachronic survey of early and later texts belonging to these diverse genres allows us to credibly exhume a repertoire of meanings assigned to *jihād* and martyrdom that were far more variegated, fluid, and contested in the early formative period (comprised roughly of the first

three centuries of Islam) when compared with later centuries. The subsequent predominance of the legal/military dimensions of these terms attests to the eventual ascendancy of the scholarly juridical class and a powerful administrative/military bureaucracy, leading to the marginalization of important early perspectives.[12] This kind of historically-anchored diachronic survey disabuses us of essentialism when it comes to the study of key historical terms and concepts associated with Muslim-majority societies, as remains far too common in both academic and popular discourses. The semantic mutability and discursive malleability of the terms *jihād* and *shahīd* as deployed through time in variegated contexts have important implications for us today, a subject that we explore further at the conclusion of this study.

I

Striving "for," "in," and "in the Path of" God

QUR'ANIC IMPERATIVES IN THE MIDDLE MECCAN–EARLY MEDINAN PERIOD

JURISTS, USUALLY IN contradistinction to Qur'ān exegetes, *ḥadīth* scholars, and ethicists, primarily dealt with *jihād* as one of the obligations of the Muslim ruler and his Muslim subjects, mainly in the context of external relations with non-Muslim polities. The law of nations or international law (*siyar*) as an integral part of classical Islamic law developed early due to this pragmatic juridical concern for the intricacies of political relations with the broader non-Muslim world, as well as with religious minorities within Islamic realms. Allowing for a degree of oversimplification, we can basically agree with Majid Khadduri's statement that the Islamic law of nations "was essentially a law governing the conduct of war and the division of booty."[1] Within legal/administrative contexts, *jihād* is primarily military in nature.

Jihād in the Qur'ān, however, is a polyvalent concept, as we noted already in the Introduction, and is by no means reducible to only a combative dimension. Early Arabic lexicographers conveyed the meaning of the basic verb *jahada* as "He strove, laboured, or toiled; exerted himself or his power or efforts or endeavours or ability. . . ." The intransitive variant verb *jahida* implied that "It (a state of life) was, or became, hard, difficult, strait, or distressful." Other verbal forms and nouns imply human exertion in encounters with particularly difficult circumstances, difficult problems, and difficult people.[2]

Various lexical derivatives from the productive Arabic root *jhd* occur in several verses in the Qur'ān with multiple inflections, grounded as they often are in specific historical contexts. These contexts are cryptically indicated for us occasionally by the Qur'anic narrative itself, but more expansively and commonly by the commentaries produced to explain the "occasions of revelation" (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) of these verses. Forty-one verses containing derivatives from

jhd, mostly as verbal forms, occur in the Qur'anic text. In addition to these derivatives, the related Qur'anic terms *qitāl* ("fighting") and *ṣabr* ("patience," "forbearance") and their derivatives occur in several verses in variegated contexts as components of what became termed in the extra-Qur'anic literature as "striving in the path of God" (*al-jihād fi sabīl allāh*).[3] These related terms also have to be taken into account for an adequately comprehensive and holistic understanding of the broad Qur'anic imperative to strive in the path of God.[4] An exhaustive study of all these verses within the restricted parameters of this monograph is, of course, not possible. We are therefore selectively studying the exegeses of a number of these verses with two primary objectives in mind: (1) to obtain a wide sampling of a range of meanings, combative and non-combative, nestled within these verses revealed during various historical circumstances, as may be reconstructed through a diachronic study of key exegetical works; and (2) to thereby derive a sense of both historical continuity and change in the semantic trajectory of these various lexemes.

Bearing in mind these objectives, the following specific verses have been selected for closer scrutiny and clustered according to the dimension(s) of *jihād* that they signify:

1. *Jāhidū fī 'llāh* and *jāhidū fīnā* (Qur'ān 22:78; 29:69)
2. *Jāhidhum bihi jihādan kabīran* (Qur'ān 25:52)
3. *Ṣabr* and its derivatives (Qur'ān 3:200)
4. *Qitāl* and its derivatives (Qur'ān 22:39–40; 2:190–194; 9:12–13; 2:216; 9:5; 9:29; and 4:95)
5. Verses referring to abstention from and termination of hostilities (Qur'ān 60:7–9; 9:6; and 8:61)
6. *Jāhadū/yajhadūn fī sabīl allāh bi-amwālihim wa-anfusihim* (Qur'ān 4:95)
7. The phrase *qutiltum fī sabīl allāh* and its variants (Qur'ān 3:157–158; 4:74; 22:58; 2:154; and 3:169)
8. Reference to *shuhadā'* (Qur'ān 4:69)
9. Heavenly compensation for the practice of *ṣabr* (Qur'ān 39:10)
10. Derivates of *jhd* and *ṣbr* together (Qur'ān 16:110; 3:142)

This chapter deals mainly with the first three categories of verses (1–3), which span the late Meccan and early Medinan periods and encode primarily non-combative meanings of *jihād*. The discussion of verses from the other categories occurs in subsequent chapters.

The *tafsīr* works consulted in this study include the early commentaries composed during the Umayyad period by Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. ca. 104/722) and Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767); the commentaries of 'Abd al-Razzāq

al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/827), al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), and al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076) from the 'Abbasid period; the commentary of the Ibāḍī exegete Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Huwwārī (d. ca. 290/903); the early Shī'ī commentaries of al-Qummī (d. after 307/919), al- 'Ayyāshī (d. ca. 320/932), and Furāt b. Ibrāhīm (fl. second half of third/ninth century) from the pre-Buwayhid period; the commentaries of al-Zamakhsharī (d. ca. 538/1144) and Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) from the Saljuq period; and the Andalusian exegete al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) in the seventh/thirteenth century, corresponding to the waning of Muslim rule in Spain and to the Mamlūk period in the Islamic East. This array of *tafsīr* works allows us to obtain representative samplings of views from some of the most influential exegetes from a variety of eras. The exegesis of the popular commentator from the Mamluk period—Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)—has not been consulted in any detailed manner in this section, although references to it occur sometimes in the text and/or in the notes. We also discuss his separate treatise on *jihād* in chapter 6, which provides us with sufficient insight into his influential perspectives on this topic. Additionally, when relevant, we have referred in the notes to the early exegetical works of 'Abd Allāh b. Wahb (d. 197/812) and Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. ca. 224/838).

A brief discussion of the biographies of the principal exegetes consulted in this study now follows in order to anchor their perspectives and writings in their historical circumstances and to indicate briefly some of their doctrinal proclivities, when relevant, that potentially colored their exegeses. In chronological order, they are:

***Tafsīr* of Mujāhid b. Jabr**: The Umayyad commentator Mujāhid b. Jabr was born in Mecca in 21/642. The extant published *Tafsīr*, first edited by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Suratī, is fragmentary and incomplete and based on a later redaction of this important work.[5] It is, however, the oldest published work of exegesis available to us. Mujāhid was one of the most prominent students of the celebrated Companion Ibn 'Abbās and is said to have faithfully transmitted the latter's commentary on the Qur'ān.[6] Mujāhid displays rationalist tendencies in his exegesis and often resorted to *ra'y* (personal opinion), for which he was criticized by some scholars.[7] However, other scholars praised his scholarship; Yaḥyā al-Qattān (d. 198/813), for example, maintained that "the [Muslim] community was agreed upon the [religious] leadership of Mujāhid" after his death in 104/722.[8]

The edition of Mujāhid's *Tafsīr* used in this study is the one by Abū Muḥammad al-Asyūṭī. The editor does not include any information about the manuscripts consulted in the preparation of this recension. However, based on internal textual evidence, we are able with a large degree of confidence to state that the views expressed in the published work at our disposal appear

to be credibly those of Mujāhid himself. His comments on select verses as recorded in the al-Asyūṭī edition are transmitted practically verbatim by exegetes after him, such as al-Ṭabarī—this will become evident in the instances we record in several chapters in this book.[9] This high degree of congruence in the views attributed to Mujāhid as attested in multiple exegetical works after him permits us to invoke these perspectives as authentically representative of the early period (mid-first/seventh to early second/eighth century), against which later understandings of a number of critical issues can be juxtaposed for comparison and contrast.[10]

***Tafsīr* of Muqātil b. Sulaymān** (d. 150/767): Another Umayyad commentator, Muqātil b. Sulaymān b. Bashīr al-Azdī al-Balkhī, lived in Basra and then in Baghdad, where he achieved renown as a Qur'ān commentator and a *mutakallim* (scholastic theologian). Like Mujāhid, he too is said to have often relied on *ra'y* in his commentary and to have made use of the *isrā'iliyyāt* (Israelite tales) attributed to Jewish and Christian sources. He was accused by some of anthropomorphism and of displaying Murji'ī and Zaydī leanings. He died in Basra at an advanced age.[11]

Muqātil made generous use of earlier commentaries often without attribution, providing us with a valuable window into early layers of exegeses from the first and second centuries of Islam.[12] As in the case of Mujāhid, cross-referencing Muqātil's comments as recorded in his published *Tafsīr*[13] with those reported by later exegetes, especially al-Ṭabarī, on select verses reveals, once again, an overwhelming degree of congruence, allowing us to credibly attribute these views to Muqātil himself in his early Umayyad milieu.[14]

***Tafsīr* of 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Ḥammām b. Nāfi' al-Ṣan'ānī** (d. 211/827): From the generation after Muqātil, this relatively early 'Abbasid *tafsīr* work contains important perspectives on many significant issues pertaining to *jihād* and martyrdom that have not always been preserved in later works. Its author was an important Yemeni scholar, who studied with some of the most prominent scholars of his time, initially in Ṣan'a and then later during trips to Syria and the Ḥijāz. These scholars included Ma'mar b. Rashīd (d. 153/770) in Ṣan'a, the Meccans Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) and Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (d. 198/813–14); the Kufan Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), the Syrian al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774), and the Medinan Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), all of whom had distinctive views on *jihād* preserved by our exegete. 'Abd al-Razzāq's *tafsīr*, which is based on an earlier exegesis by his teacher Ma'mar, as well as his *Muṣannaf*, therefore remain highly valuable repositories of information, particularly about early second/eighth century scholarship in Mecca, Medina, and Basra, and "provide access to some of the earliest compilations of legal and exegetical traditions not preserved as original sources."[15]

Tanwīr al-miqbās: The early *tafsīr* work with the title *Tanwīr al-miqbās min tafsīr Ibn ʻAbbās*, purporting to contain the exegesis of the Companion Ibn ʻAbbās (d. ca. 68/687), has been generally attributed to the later exegete and genealogist Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī (d. 146/763). This attribution to Ibn ʻAbbās via al-Kalbī remains open to debate, however, among modern scholars. Some editions of the commentary have also attributed the work to the much later scholar al-Firūzabādī (d. 817/1414).[16] Because the tone and content of much of the exegetical material contained in this work often tend to agree with that of other certifiably early works, suggesting the genuinely early provenance of many of the views recorded in this work, the *Tanwīr al-miqbās* is treated here as an early work (roughly before the end of the third/ninth century), but of undetermined date and authorship.[17]

The commentary of third/ninth century Ibāḍī commentator Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Huwwārī (d. ca. 290/903), titled *Tafsīr kitāb allāh al-ʻazīz*, was recently edited by Balḥāj b. Saʻīd Sharifī and published in Beirut in 1990. Not much is known about this Maghribi exegete; his father served as a judge for the Ibāḍī Imām ʻAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam (ruled 171-208/788-824).[18] Ibn Muḥakkam's *tafsīr* is the oldest extant Ibāḍ ī Qurʾān commentary available to us.

***Tafsīr* of al-Qummī** (d. after 307/919): ʻAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī was an early Shīʻī commentator from the critical period between the period of the Lesser and Greater Occultation (260/874–329/941) when the Imāmī Shīʻī doctrine had not been fully formed. As became common after him, al-Qummī engages in allegorical interpretation of the Qurʾanic text, which is assumed to contain esoteric references to the family of the Prophet and to the special status of ʻAlī. Al-Qummī frequently records the exegetical opinions particularly of the fifth and the sixth Imams, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. ca. 114/732) and Jaʻfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), unlike later Shīʻī exegetes.

***Tafsīr* al-ʻAyyāshī** (d. ca. 320/932): Abū ʾl-Naṣr Muḥammad b. Masʿūd b. Muḥammad al-ʻAyyāshī was originally from Samarqand and converted to Shiʻism from Sunnī Islam in his youth. He was said to have been a prolific scholar, having composed over 200 works. Among his students were Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Kashshī (d. ca. early fourth/tenth century), author of a famous Shīʻī *rijāl* work. Although al- ʻAyyāshī was regarded as narrating weak traditions, he is frequently cited by later authors. Like al-Qummī before him, he interprets many Qurʾanic verses as containing direct references to the *ahl al-bayt*, generally on the authority of the fifth and sixth Imams.[19]

***Tafsīr* of Furāt b. Ibrāhīm** (fl. second half of third/ninth century): Very little is known about Furāt b. Ibrāhīm b. Furāt al-Kūfī, including his precise birth and date years. Fuat Sezgin's suggested death date of circa 310/922 is certainly

plausible. Furāt was clearly affiliated in some way with Kufa, as his *nisba* suggests, and we know that he transmitted from al-Ḥusayn b. Sa'īd al-Kūfī (d. ca. 300/912). Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Bābawayh (d. 329/940), father of the more famous Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābawayh (d. 381/991), transmitted traditions from Furāt. He is also quoted extensively by later Shī'ī scholars like al-Ḥurr al- 'Āmilī (d. 1104/1693) and al-Majlisī (d. between 1110/1699–1111/1700).[20]

***Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī** (d. 310/923): The celebrated exegete Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr, originally from Ṭabaristān, is the author of probably the most widely consulted work of Islamic exegesis, the *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-qur'ān*, more simply known as *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*.[21] Along with the magisterial work of history that he compiled, this work showcases al-Ṭabarī's encyclopedic knowledge of the various Islamic sciences. The *Tafsīr* is notable for its emphasis on *ijtihād* or independent reasoning; besides religious dogma and law, al-Ṭabarī also plays close attention to grammar and lexicography in this work. Al-Ṭabarī's pro-'Abbasid bias—he had worked for the 'Abbasid government in various capacities—is frequently quite apparent in his *Tafsīr* as it is in his *Ta'rīkh*, and sometimes explains the overall cast of his interpretations.[22]

***Tafsīr* of al-Wāḥidī** (d. 468/1076): 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Wāḥidī al-Nīsābūrī is the author of several exegetical works, including the *Tafsīr al-wāsiṭ*, the work used in this study.[23] In Nīsābūr, he studied with the well-known Qur'ān scholar Abū Isḥāq al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035) and studied *ḥadīth* and Shāfi'ī law with Abū 'l- 'Abbās al-Aṣamm (d. 265/878). Al-Wāḥidī is said to have completed the *Wāsiṭ* around 461/1069, having started it five decades earlier. In comparison with the popular and shorter commentary *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, the *Wāsiṭ* is more extensive in its scope.[24] As will become evident below, al-Wāḥidī emphasizes in his commentary the close philological study of the Qur'ān and often offers fresh perspectives, particularly as he is said to have often discounted the views of other exegetes for what he deemed to be their imperfect, non-philological understanding of the Qur'anic text.[25]

***Tafsīr* of al-Zamakhsharī** (d. 538/1144): Abū 'l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, from Zamakhshar in Persia, was an accomplished grammarian, philologist, theologian, exegete, litterateur, and author of a highly regarded Qur'ān commentary.[26] He lived for a long time in Mecca, where he studied grammar, theology, and *tafsīr*. His Mu'tazilī (rationalist) affiliation is evident in this work of exegesis, which has a strong linguistic focus and contains very little *ḥadīth* (the Mu'tazila in general being skeptical of the probative value of *ḥadīth*), in comparison with other exegetical works of a similar period.[27]

***Tafsīr* of al-Rāzī** (d. 606/1210): Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. al-Ḥusayn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, as indicated by his last name, was from Rayy in Persia, where

he was educated in grammar, philosophy, *kalām* (scholastic theology), and jurisprudence. He later went to Khwārazm, where he is said to have relentlessly debated the Mu'tazila, who eventually forced him to leave. After meeting the same fate in Transoxania, he returned to Rayy. By way of other towns, he finally settled down in Herat, where he acquired a great reputation as a formidable scholar with numerous disciples, earning the title *shaykh al-islām*. Al-Rāzī was an ardent Sunnī and, besides the Mu'tazila, he also dueled with the Karrāmiya, who were proponents of anthropomorphism. But he was also selectively critical of Ash'arism while yet a proponent of it; he rejected, for example, al-Ash'arī's doctrine of divine attributes and his atomism. His *tafsīr* thus pays considerable attention to issues of *kalām* and philosophy and attempts to justify his own theological and philosophical reasoning on the basis of specific Qur'anic verses.[28]

It should be noted that during the lifetime of this Seljuq scholar, the Third and the Fourth Crusades (1189–1192 and 1198–1207 CE respectively) were launched, which fact seems on occasion to have directly impacted al-Rāzī's conceptualizations of the military *jihād*, as will become evident in our subsequent discussion.

Tafsīr of al-Qurṭubī: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), the well-known Andalusian scholar of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, is the author of the exegetical work *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-qur'ān*. An adherent of the Mālikī school of law, al-Qurṭubī was known equally for his prodigious scholarship and personal piety. The *Jāmi'* makes considerable use of *ḥadīth* and has a strong legal focus, while also paying close attention to the philological and rhetorical aspects of the Qur'anic language. Compared with a number of his predecessors, al-Qurṭubī is sparing in his use of the *isrā'iliyyāt* in his commentary.[29] Written during the time of the Spanish Reconquista, this *tafsīr* work evinces the anxieties and concerns of Andalusian Muslims of the period, and shapes al-Qurṭubī's perspectives on the parameters of the military *jihād*.

We now proceed to the exegeses of a selection of critical verses from the first three categories under the following broad rubrics.

Jihād in the Middle–Late Meccan Period (ca. 617 – 622 CE)

"Do not obey the unbelievers and strive against them mightily with it" (Qur'ān 25:52)

This verse, believed to have been revealed in the middle Meccan period (ca. 617–619 CE), contains an important injunction derived from *jhd* to connote a

specific type of striving against unbelievers. In Arabic, the verse runs: *Fa- lā tuṭī' al-kāfirīn wa-jāhidhum bihi jihādan kabīran*.

The second/eighth century exegete Muqātil b. Sulaymān briefly states that he understands the enclitic pronoun in *bihi* to refer to the Qur'ān,[30] as does Hūd b. Muḥakkam. The latter exegete further states that *jihādan kabīran* in the verse means to strive intensely (*shadīdan*). This kind of *jihād* refers to *jihād* of the tongue (*wa-hādha al-jihād innamā huwa bi-'l-lisān*) in the Meccan period before fighting was permitted.[31] The *Tanwīr al-miqbās* understands both the Qur'ān and the sword to be indicated in this verse.[32]

Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī in the early fourth/tenth century understands this verse to warn the Prophet: "Do not obey the unbelievers in regard to their summons to worship their gods for then we will cause you to taste the weakness of [this] life and of death. Instead, strive against them mightily with this Qur'ān so that they may be led to believe in what is contained within it of God's commandments, to comply with it [sc. the Qur'ān], and implement its injunctions, willingly or unwillingly." Among those who subscribed to this view was Ibn 'Abbās, while Ibn Zayd was of the opinion that it was "Islam" with which one should strive.[33]

Al-Wāḥidī dwells briefly on this verse and explains it as follows: "When he [sc. Muḥammad] is summoned to the religion of his fathers, he should strive against them with the Qur'ān, comprehensively and firmly."[34]

Al-Zamakhsharī regards the enclitic pronoun in *bihi* to refer to either the Qur'ān or the avoidance of obedience to unbelievers. In the case of the latter, the intent of the verse would be to exhort the Prophet to exert his utmost to counter the relentless efforts of the unbelievers to sabotage his mission. These exertions on the part of the Prophet are deemed "a mighty striving" because of the great hardships they entailed. It is also possible, al-Zamakhsharī states, that the enclitic pronoun encodes a reference to the previous verse, which states, "If we had so willed, we would have sent a warner to every city (*qarya*)." Because Muḥammad is to be considered as a warner to all cities, he also combines in himself the efforts of each individual warner sent to each city. These combined efforts on his part constitute the great striving referred to in this verse.[35]

Al-Rāzī relates that some believed that the verse referred to the effort expended in implementing [the laws of God] and inviting to Islam, whereas others believed that it referred to fighting; yet others said that it referred to both. He says that the first strand of interpretation is the most plausible because the chapter is Meccan and the command to fight was given after the migration to Medina. Like al-Zamakhsharī, he considers *jihādan kabīran* to refer to the herculean efforts expended by the Prophet in his role as the warner to all cities.[36]

Al-Qurtubī lists the referent for *bihi* as the Qur'ān, according to Ibn 'Abbās; Islam, according to Ibn Zayd; and the sword, according to unnamed others. Al-Qurṭubī, like al-Rāzī, discounts the third possibility as the chapter containing this verse is Meccan and was revealed before the command to fight was given.[37]

In summary, a majority of the exegetes, including al-Ṭabarī, understood the enclitic pronoun in *bihi* to be a reference to the Qur'ān, primarily on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās. Ibn Zayd is the source of the alternate view that it referred to Islam. The minority view that it referred to "the sword" or fighting against the polytheists is recorded in the *Tanwīr al-miqbās*. Both al-Rāzī and al-Qurṭubī reject this interpretation as ahistorical, because the verse is universally deemed to be Meccan, and the command to fight was not given until the Medinan period. It should also be added here that "a great striving" mentioned in this verse prefigures the well-known distinction between the greater and lesser *jihād* articulated in a later prophetic report.

"As for those who struggle in regard to Us, we will surely guide them to Our paths. Indeed God is with those who do good" (Qur'ān 29:69)

In Arabic, this verse states: *Walladhīna jāhadū fīnā la-nahdiyannahum subulanā wa-inna allāh la-ma'a 'l-muḥsinīn*. The twenty-ninth chapter (Sūrat al-'Ankabūt) is generally regarded as a late Meccan revelation.

Muqātil explains this verse as referring to those who do good deeds for the sake of God (*'amilū bi -'l-khayr li-llāh*) and cross-references Qur'ān 22:78 here. "We will guide them to our paths" means that they will be guided to "our religion" (*ya'ni dīnanā*) and that God provides help (*al-'awn*) for those who do good.[38]

The *Tanwīr al-Miqbās* glosses "those who struggle in regard to Us" as [those who struggle] to obey us. According to Ibn 'Abbās, "We will guide them to Our paths" means that "those who act according to what they know, we will grant them success in what they do not know." Others say it means that "we will guide them to our paths in order to raise them to an honorable status in regard to their nature (*bi-'l-ṭab'*), obedience (*wa-'l-ṭaw'*), and sweetness [of disposition] (*al-ḥalāwa*)." Yet others say the verse means that "we will guide them to our paths in order to grant them success for obeying us." "God is with those who do good" means that "He helps those who do good through speech and deed by granting them success and impeccability" (*al-'iṣma*).[39]

Hūd b. Muḥakkam very briefly glosses *walladhīna jāhadū fīnā* as a reference to those who "act for us" (*'amalū lanā*). "Our paths" in the verse refers to "the

path of guidance," which refers to "the road to heaven" (*al-ṭarīq ilā 'l-janna*). The verse was revealed, he continues, before the military *jihād* was commanded in Medina. The *muḥsinīn* are the believers (*al-mu'minīn*).[40]

In his very brief commentary on this verse, Furāt b. Ibrāhīm records that Abū Ja'far (sc. Muḥammad al-Bāqir, the fifth Imām) had understood this verse as having been revealed "concerning us, the *ahl al-bayt*."[41]

Al-Qummī understands "those who struggle in regard to us" as describing those "who are patient (*ṣabarū*) and strive with the Messenger of God," without offering any further details on the nature of this striving. Characteristically, he sees a reference to the family of Muḥammad and their partisans (*li ashyā'īhim*) in this verse, on the authority of Abū 'l-Jārūd and Abū Ja'far.[42] Of great significance is al-Qummī's coupling of *jihād* and *ṣabr* in his exegesis of this verse.

In comparison with these early exegetical perspectives, we note a sharp semantic and exegetical shift in al-Ṭabarī's commentary. Al-Ṭabarī says that the verse refers to "those who fought (*qātalū*) the unbelievers from the Quraysh for the lies that they fabricate against God," and "for having denied the truth which came to them concerning us." The believers fight to establish the superiority of their claims and ensure "[divine] help for our religion," he says. "We guide them to our paths" means "we grant them success in attaining the straight paths" (*al-ṭuruq al-mustaqīma*). This is to be understood as "the attainment of the religion of God, which is Islam, with which God sent Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him," continues al-Ṭabarī. The last part of the verse means that God helps those who are of good character (*aḥsana min khalqihi*) and who fight the polytheists for His sake, affirming the truth of the divine message proclaimed by His messenger. Al-Ṭabarī states in general that other exegetes have commented similarly on this verse, but specifically mentions only Ibn Zayd (d. 182/798)[43] who had glossed *jāhadū fīnā* as *qātalū fīnā*.[44] Ibn Zayd's explicit collapsing of the two verbs *jāhadū* and *qātalū* clearly meets with al-Ṭabarī's approval, indicating to us that in his time (late third/ninth–early fourth/tenth century), the equation *jihād* = *qitāl* had already gained ground and become predominant in influential circles during the 'Abbasid period. Al-Ṭabarī does not refer to other scholars who may have understood this verse to refer to non-combative striving.

In the following century, al-Wāḥidī similarly takes note of Ibn Zayd's exegesis of Qur'ān 29:69 as referring to fighting the polytheists,[45] but expresses strong reservations about its validity. Instead, he expresses a preference for Ibn 'Abbās's interpretation that the verse referred to the *Muhājirūn* (Meccan Emigrants) and the *Anṣār* (the Medinan Helpers) in general, with no implicit or explicit connotation of fighting against the Quraysh.[46]

In his brief commentary, al-Zamakhsharī stresses that the word "striving" (*al-mujāhada*) as it occurs in this verse is used in a general sense and is not in reference to any specific individual, group, or object. Thus "striving" here can be directed against the carnal self that inclines to evil, to Satan, and to the enemies of religion. *Fīnā* variously means "in regard to our rights" (*fī ḥaqqinā*), "for our sake" (*min ajlinā*), and "exclusively for our selves" (*li-wajhinā khāli*^{an}). "We will guide them to our paths" means that we will increase them in guidance to "the paths of goodness" (*ilā subul al-khayr*) and success, as is indicated in Qur'ān 47:17.[47]

Al-Rāzī says that after the unbelievers are rebuked for their unbelief in Qur'ān 29:68, the following verse offers consolation to the believers by assuring them that whoever strives in obedience will be guided to the paths of paradise. "God is with those who do good" is understood in relation to Qur'ān 10:26, where it is stated, "For those who do good, there is goodness (*al-ḥusnā*) and more." The last part of the verse signifies companionship and closeness to God, which augments the reward of the one who does good.[48]

The verse may also be understood to endorse the epistemic value of critical investigation of the truth, continues al-Rāzī. Thus "those who strove in regard to us" may refer to "those who have critically examined our proofs" (*alladhīna naẓarū fī dalā'ilina*) so that "they may attain knowledge concerning Us," he states. Al-Rāzī refers approvingly to his Mu'tazilī colleagues, who understood this verse as suggesting that God is the guide for the righteous who guard against absolutism and obstinacy (*yattaqūna al-ta'aṣṣub wa-'l-'inād*) and resort to critical examination (*al-naẓar*) of divine proofs.[49] Like al-Wāḥidī and al-Zamakhsharī immediately before him and all the pre-Ṭabarī commentators we looked at, al-Rāzī discerns a general injunction in this verse to obey God to the best of one's ability and, additionally, on the basis of Mu'tazilī exegeses, a command to critically and strenuously examine divine proofs from which the Truth may be deduced.

Al-Qurṭubī glosses "Those who strove in regard to us" broadly as "[those who] strove against the unbelievers in regard to us; that is, in seeking our satisfaction." Striving against the unbelievers in this verse thus refers primarily to non-combative acts of piety and resistance to wrongdoing. Al-Qurṭubī next proceeds to record an impressive range of interpretations that ascribe primarily spiritual and intellectualmeanings to *jihād* as occurs in this verse, according to several early authorities. Thus he observes that the well-known early Kufan exegete al-Suddī (d. 128/745)[50] and other commentators had noted that this verse had been revealed before the imposition of fighting as a religious duty. The fourth/tenth century exegete Ibn 'Aṭiyya (d. 383/993)[51] had also affirmed that the verse came down before "the conventional [sc. military] *jihād*" (*al-jihād*

al-'urfī) was sanctioned, and that the *jihād* referred to in this verse is to be understood as "a general striving for the religion of God and the seeking of His satisfaction." Al-Hasan b. Abī 'l-Hasan[52] had commented that the verse refers to pious worshipers in general (*al-āya fi-'l-'ubbād*). Additionally, Ibn 'Abbās, the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al- 'Azīz (d. 101/720), 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, and Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. ca. 163/779) had understood this verse to refer to nonviolent striving.[53] Combative meanings are assigned to *jihād* in this verse by al-Qurṭubī on the authority of a far smaller number of scholars, specifically Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (d. 196/811) and Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. ca. 205/820), who regarded fighting as part of the overall human striving in this world. This survey notably reveals that post-al-Ṭabarī commentators continued to preserve and emphasize the non-combative dimensions of *jihād* that were prominent in commentaries attributed to early exegetes before al-Ṭabarī.[54]

Jihād in the Late Meccan–Early Medinan Period (ca. 619 CE -2/624)

"Strive in regard to God a true striving as is His due"[55]

In Arabic: Wa-jāhidū fī 'llāh ḥaqqa jihādihi (Qur'ān 22:78)

The Arabic locution *fī'llāh* ("in regard to God") in this precise formulation occurs only once in the Qur'ān and tends to be overlooked in most discussions of the term *jihād*. This variant formulation, along with *fīnā* in Qur'ān 29:69 discussed above, of what became the more common locution [*al-jihād*] *fī sabil allāh* are worthy of closer attention. There is debate among the exegetes as to whether the entire chapter (Sūrat al-Ḥajj) from which this verse is derived is Meccan or Medinan—a critical distinction after all in understanding the meaning of *jihād* in this verse. Based on the exegetical discussion below, we are treating it as a "transition" verse, so to speak, straddling the late Meccan–early Medinan period, and encapsulating a broad array of semantic possibilities in relation to *jihād* and its derivatives.

Muqātil b. Sulaymān understands *wa-jāhidu fī 'llāh* to mean "He commands them to act" (*ya'muruhum bi-'l-'amal*) and *ḥaqqa jihādihi* to mean "Do good deeds for God as is His due" (*a'milū li-'llāh bi-'l-khayr ḥaqqa 'amalihi*). In his understanding, *jāhidū* in this verse establishes the imperative to excel in the performance of good deeds in general to earn divine approbation.[56] A similar meaning can be found in the *Tanwīr al-miqbās*, where *wa-jāhidū fī 'llāh ḥaqqa jihādihi* is glossed as "Work for God as is His due" (*wa-'malū li-'llāh ḥaqqa 'amalihi*).[57] This verse thus enjoins, according to the *Tanwīr*, that humans should strive to act for the sake of God as is appropriately due Him.

Hūd b. Muḥakkam simply remarks that this verse was considered to have been abrogated by Qur'ān 64:16 (which states, "Revere God to the extent that you are able").[58] Furāt b. Ibrāhīm and al-Qummī also have only the briefest remarks preserved in their extant commentaries on Qur'ān 22:78, the former affirming on the authority of Muḥammad al-Bāqir that the Shī'ī imams were the referent in this case,[59] and the latter stating that it is a specific reference to the family of Muḥammad (Āl Muḥammad).[60]

By the time we get to al-Ṭabarī, a significant shift, once again, appears to have occurred in the primary meaning assigned to the phrase *jāhidu fī-'llāh* in comparison with these earlier views. Al-Ṭabarī admits that there are differences of opinion among exegetes regarding the meaning of this verse, but the meaning he privileges on the authority of some of these unnamed exegetes (*fa-qāla ba'ḍuhum*) is "Struggle against the polytheists (*wa-jāhidū 'l-mushrikīn*) in the path of God as is rightly due Him." In al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr*, therefore, the prepositional phrase *fī 'llāh* is now deemed to be the equivalent of *fī sabīl allāh*, an equation we did not find in the extant versions of earlier commentaries referred to above. Furthermore, *jāhidū* in this context is understood by al-Ṭabarī to connote struggling—with the implication of fighting—against associationists, again a connotation not encountered in the earlier works referenced above. This meaning is further anchored by the invocation of an additional authority—'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb—who is said to have understood the report as counseling fighting against the two Qurayshī tribes of Makhzūm and 'Abd Shams.[61]

The main authority al-Ṭabarī cites in support of this changed meaning is, interestingly, Ibn 'Abbās, who, according to a chain of transmission ending with Yūnus,[62] is said to have understood *jāhidū fī 'llāh ḥaqqa jihādihi* as "struggle against them as [you did] the first time" (*kamā jāhadtum awwal marra*). Ibn 'Abbās is also quoted, via a different *isnād* culminating in al-Qāsim,[63] as understanding this phrase to mean "For the sake of God, do not be afraid of the censure of those who censure" (*la takhāfu fī 'llāh lawmat lā'im*).[64] Two divergent strands of meaning—one potentially combative, the other not—are thus attributed by different narrators to the same prominent Companion.

After listing these glosses, al-Ṭabarī refers to unnamed others (*ākharūn*) who were of the opinion that *jāhidū fī 'llāh ḥaqqa jihādihi* means "Perform a deed appropriately as is due Him" (*a'milū bi-'l-haqq ḥaqqa 'amalihi*). This commentary was transmitted on the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥāk by some "whose narration was regarded with suspicion,"[65] cautions al-Ṭabarī. He then goes on to express his preference (*wa-'l-ṣawāb min al-qawl*) for the school of thought that held *jāhidū fī 'llāh ḥaqqa jihādihi* means "fighting in the path of God" (*al-jihād fī sabīl allāh*), as that had become by his time the established meaning of *jihād*. This school of

thought, he asserts, is more prevalent than the one that interprets this phrase to mean exerting oneself to the utmost in the performance of an action for the sake of God.[66] It is worthy of note that al-Ṭabarī's main reason for privileging the meaning of this verse as referring to "fighting in the path of God" is not because Ibn ʿAbbās in his opinion is the more reliable transmitter in this case, but because this meaning had become by his time the predominant one—an assertion that is remarkable for its circular reasoning.

In contradistinction to al-Ṭabarī, al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076)[67] privileges the non-combative meanings of *jāhidū fī 'llāh* in his exegesis. He states that a majority of the commentators have understood the meaning of *jihād* in this context to apply to "all acts of obedience" (*jāmiʿ aʿmāl al-ṭāʿa*), and the phrase *ḥaqqa 'l-jihād* refers to the performance of such acts in sincere dedication to God (*ṣādiqat*^{an} *khāliṣat*^{an} *li-'llāh taʿālā*). According to the early exegete Muqātil b. Ḥayyān (d. ca. 150/767),[68] *ḥaqqa 'l-jihād* refers to "striving diligently in [one's] deeds (*yajtahidū fī 'l-ʿamal*)."[69] Al-Wāḥidi further refers to ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797)[70] who understood this verse as referring to "striving against one's desires and the [carnal] self."[71]

By the sixth/twelfth century, it is clear that both the combative and non-combative strands of meaning in relation to Qur'ān 22:78 had become widely accepted by the exegetes. Thus al-Zamakhsharī understands *wa-jāhidū* in this verse to command both "fighting" (*amara bi-'l-ghazw*) and striving against one's carnal self and desires (*wa-bi-mujāhadat al-nafs wa-'l-hawā*). The latter constitutes "the greater *jihād*." This is so, al-Zamakhsharī says, because it is known that when the Prophet returned from one of his military campaigns, he remarked, "We have returned from the lesser *jihād* to the greater *jihād*." *Fī 'llāh* means "exclusively for the sake of God."[72]

Al-Rāzī in the late sixth/twelfth century begins by referencing al-Zamakhsharī's views[73] and similarly states that this verse emphasizes above all that one undertake *jihād* only and absolutely for the sake of God (*fī dhāt allāh wa-min ajlihi*). And what is the nature of this *jihād*? Al-Rāzi explains that what is specifically intended here is fighting the unbelievers (*anna 'l-murād qitāl al-kuffār khāṣṣat*^{an}). *Ḥaqqa jihādihi* means, first, that one should not carry out *jihād* "except as an act of worship, desiring neither renown nor riches in the world," and second, that Muslims should fight in latter times as robustly as they had fought in the early period, especially during the battle of Badr. This is referenced by a report from Ibn ʿAbbās in which he states, "Strive/fight in regard to God a true striving as is His due just as you strove/fought the first time" (as also recorded by al-Ṭabarī above). Al-Rāzī also refers to ʿUmar's exegesis of the verse as counseling fighting against the Makhzūm and ʿAbd Shams.[74]

Other early authorities cited by al-Rāzi, however, contradictorily impute non-combative meanings to *jihād* in this verse. Thus, according to Ibn ʿAbbās, *ḥaqqa jihādihi* means that one should not fear the censure of other people for the sake of God, while al-Ḍaḥḥāk believed that it means that one should act for the sake of God as is His due; views that were also recorded by earlier commentators as we saw. Another possible meaning, continues al-Rāzī, is that one should exert one's utmost to revive the religion of God and establish His rights through waging war with one's hands, tongue, and whatever else one can muster, and to ward off base desires and inclinations. Like al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī references ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak, who had explained *ḥaqqa jihādihi* as striving against one's self and desires (*mujāhadat al-nafs wa-'l-hawā*). Al-Rāzī further mentions that when Muḥammad returned from the campaign to Tabūk (in 9/630), he commented, "We have returned from the lesser *jihād* to the greater *jihād*." It is therefore more appropriate to believe, he says, that this phrase applies to all kinds of obligations (*ʿalā kull al-takālīf*), for the effort to fulfill God's positive commandments and avoid what is prohibited is *jihād*, properly speaking. As for the opinion expressed by Muqātil and al-Kalbī that Qur'ān 22:78 was abrogated by Qur'ān 64:16, it is dismissed by al-Rāzī as untenable, because God does not ordain anything that is beyond human ability.[75]

Al-Qurṭubī in the seventh/thirteenth century relates that, according to some, this verse refers to fighting against the unbelievers (*jihād al-kuffār*), whereas, according to others, the verse refers in general to the observance of all the commandments of God and refraining from everything He has proscribed. The latter includes struggling against the following four sources of temptation and disorder: (1) against one's carnal self in order to obey God and restrain it from following base desires; (2) against Satan in order to repel his evil insinuations (*waswasatahu*); (3) against oppressors to ward off their oppression; and (4) against unbelievers to refute their unbelief. *Jihād* here is to be understood, continues al-Qurṭubī, to refer to the human internal struggle [against one's carnal self], as is indicated by the *ḥadīth* narrated by Ḥayāt b. Shurayḥ, who quoted the Prophet as saying, "The striver (*al-mujāhid*) is one who strives against his self for the sake of God, the Mighty, the Exalted." *Jihād* is furthermore the duty to always speak a word of truth, he affirms, as becomes evident in another *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Umāma, in which a man asked the Prophet, "Which is the best *jihād*?" After a period of silence, he received the reply, "[The best *jihād* is] a word of justice to a tyrannical ruler."[76]

The trajectory of shifting meanings and emphases over time in connection with *jihād*—as becomes apparent in the exegeses of the verses discussed above—is highly revealing of the emergence of competing paradigms of piety linked to a growing communal identity on the part of early Muslims. The contested nature of

the parameters of this identity as it was coalescing in the formative period becomes encoded in these discourses of moral excellence that seek to decipher the best way to strive—at both the individual and communal levels—for the sake of God.

Patient Forbearance as a Component of Striving in the Path of God

We now move on to a treatment of patient forbearance as a nonviolent component of *jihād* in Qur'anic discourse. As we noted before, *ṣabr*, commonly and variously translated into English as "patience," "forbearance," and "steadfastness," is typically not described as a component of *al-jihād fi sabīl allāh* in legal and other works. And yet the Qur'ān often singles out *ṣabr* as an essential trait of the believers in their striving to fulfill the religious duties incumbent upon them—which is *jihād* broadly understood in the Qur'anic context, as our previous discussion of relevant verses established. The Qur'ān also occasionally couples *jihād* and its derivatives with *ṣabr* and its derivatives. The *mujāhid* (the striver) and the *ṣābir* (the patient/steadfast) together are often extolled as the most morally excellent among humankind, a coupling that became more common during the Medinan period when the combative *jihād* became permissible after the *hijra*. In this chapter, we focus specifically on a particular verse (Qur'ān 3:200), regarded as an early Medinan revelation, that over time through semantic and hermeneutic manipulation became anachronistically associated with *ribāṭ*—the post-prophetic military activity of guarding the *thughūr* (frontiers). A comparison of the exegeses of early and late commentators on this verse is highly revealing of the contested nature of this martial interpretation and points to critical transformations in the conceptualizations of *jihād* and its relation to the vital attribute of *ṣabr* over time.

Qur'ān 3:200: *Ṣabr* and Its Derivatives

Qur'ān 3:200 states, "O those who believe, be patient and forbearing (aṣbirū), outdo others in forbearance (ṣābirū), be firm (rābiṭū), and revere God so that you may succeed"

In his brief commentary on this early Medinan verse,[77] the early Meccan exegete Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī (d. 104/722) attributes to his contemporary al-Hasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) the comment that the verse counsels believers to be steadfast in their religion, to bear patiently with the unbelievers until they despair of their religion, and to be firm against the polytheists.[78]

About a generation later, Muqātil b. Sulaymān comments that the verse exhorts believers to be steadfast in carrying out the commands and duties

imposed by God, forbearing with the Prophet wherever he is, and firm against the enemy in the path of God (*wa-rābiṭū 'l-'aduw fī sabīl allāh*) "until they forsake their religion for yours."[79] Despite the invocation of *fī sabīl allāh*, there does not appear to be any hint of military combat in engaging the adversary in this manner.

In his very brief exegesis of this verse, the early third/ninth century Yemeni exegete 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/827)[80] records a report from Ma'mar relating from Qatāda that this verse counsels believers to bear patiently with the polytheists (*ṣābirū al-mushrikīn*) and hold fast in the path of God (*rābiṭū fī sabīl allāh*).[81] Once again we note the conjoining of *fī sabīl allāh* with *ribāṭ* without the overt implication of military activity.

In the second half of the third/ninth century, Hūd b. Muḥakkam cites unnamed exegetes who interpreted this verse as counseling "patient perseverance in obeying God, forbearance with the people of error (*ahl al-ḍalāla*), and remaining firm in the path of God." Others said that it means "Persevere in [carrying out] the religious obligations, and be firm with the enemy." Ibn Muḥakkam also makes no explicit association between *rābiṭū fī sabīl allāh*/*rābiṭū al-'aduw* and fighting.[82]

Our early Shī'ī exegetes from the second half of the third/ninth century understand this verse as generally counseling patience and perseverance in observing one's religious duties. Thus Furāt b. Ibrāhīm comments that *aṣbirū* in the verse counsels believers to be patient with "yourselves" (*anfusakum*); *ṣābirū* means to be forbearing with your enemies; and *rābiṭū* means to be steadfast in the path of God (*fī sabīl allāh*). The verse, he says, was revealed in reference to Muḥammad, 'Alī, and Hamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.[83]

Both al-Qummī and al-'Ayyāshī (d. ca. 320/932)[84] quote the sixth Shī'ī Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq as counseling in explanation of this verse, "Be patient during your tribulations (*al-maṣā'ib*), steadfast during the [performance of] religious duties (*al-farā'iḍ*), and adhere to the Imāms."[85] The eighth Imām 'Alī al-Riḍā (d. 202/818) is said to have described the *ṣābirūn* as those who had patiently carried out their religious obligations and the *mutaṣabbirūn* as those who had been steadfast in avoiding what has been prohibited.[86] In a more sectarian vein in a slightly later period, al-'Ayyāshī records that according to Abū 'l-Ṭufayl, the fifth Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir had said that the [true] *murābiṭ* would be "from among our offspring."[87]

Al-Ṭabarī as usual offers us a much more variegated and detailed exegesis emanating from different sources that nicely encapsulate for us the contested meanings of this verse by the late third/ninth century. A number of exegetes, as he documents, understood the verse to mean "Remain steadfast in your faith and bear patiently the unbelievers[' harm] and be firm with them."

Among this group of exegetes were the Successors al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatāda b. Di'āma (d. 118/736),[88] Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767),[89] and al-Ḍaḥḥāk.[90] Another group of exegetes, which included Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraẓī (d. 118/736),[91] maintained that the verse means "Remain steadfast in your faith, and wait patiently for My promise to you regarding your obedience to Me, and be firm against your enemies."[92] In these two exegetical clusters, it is noteworthy that the term *jihād* does not occur, and fighting the enemy is not indicated.

In a third cluster of comments, *jihād* is explicitly mentioned by a group of exegetes who explained this verse as "Be patient in *jihād* [here implying fighting] and steadfast against your enemies and be firm against them." Among this group was Zayd b. Aslam (d. 136/753),[93] who said that the verse counsels believers to be patient during the military *jihād*, and to remain steadfast and firm against their enemies. Another report from Zayd b. Aslam states in connection with this verse that Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 18/639) wrote to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and referred to the mobilization of a large number of Byzantine troops and the fear they had induced in Muslims. 'Umar wrote back remarking that whenever hardship befalls a pious believer, God confers joyous relief (*faraj*) on him afterward, and that this verse had been revealed to convey this assurance.[94] This report references 'Umar's deployment of this verse in a specific military context, signaling the addition of this new semantic dimension in the post-prophetic period.

Yet other commentators offered an altogether different and noteworthy meaning of *rābiṭū*, namely to "Observe your prayers," literally "wait for them [the prayers] one after another." Thus, according to one report, Abū Salama b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. between 94–104/712–722)[95] once asked his nephew, "Do you know what this verse was revealed about?" When the boy answered in the negative, Abū Salama said, "My nephew, there were no campaigns (*ghazw*) during the time of the Prophet which required guarding the frontiers (*yurābaṭ fīhi*). It rather means to be vigilant concerning the [performance of the] prayers, one after the other." Another report on the authority of Shuraḥbīl [b. Sa'īd] (d. ca. 123/740)[96] relates that 'Alī had remarked that the Prophet once asked, "Shall I not indicate to you what will cause God to blot out your sins and lapses? The performance of the full ablution in difficult circumstances and anticipation of the prayers, one after another—that is *al-ribāṭ*."[97]

At this point, al-Ṭabarī weighs in and begins to sort through these reports and evaluate them. He establishes first of all that the verse addresses those who believe in God and His messenger and counsels them—*aṣbirū*—to be steadfast in their religion and in obedience to their Lord.[98] *Wa-ṣābirū*, al-Ṭabarī continues, means "Be steadfast with your enemies from among the polytheists." This is the preferred understanding, he maintains, because the third

verbal form in Arabic, as is well-known, usually requires that there be two or more actors implied in the verb. Therefore, the believers are counseled here to be more patient or steadfast than their enemies, until God grants the former victory over the latter and His word is paramount and their enemies are disgraced.[99] *Rābiṭū* means "Be firm in the path of God with your enemies and the enemies of your religion from among the polytheists." Al-Ṭabarī considers the verbal noun *ribāṭ* in this verse to be already a reference to the deployment of horses to secure the frontiers against enemy cavalry forces.[100] In this highly significant exegesis of this important verse, al-Ṭabarī makes clear that by his time, *ribāṭ* had acquired a predominantly military inflection, for which he shows a clear preference, superseding what was clearly the earlier common understanding of this term as mainly indicating vigilance and steadfastness in daily prayers. Al-Ṭabarī offers no explanation as to why the Qur'ān would be referring to a practice—*ribāṭ* as guarding the frontiers—that had developed after the death of the Prophet, a point that had been noted by a number of his predecessors and had caused them to dismiss this possible construal.

Al-Wāḥidī says that this verse, according to al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī], means "[Be steadfast] in your religion and do not forsake it on account of hardship." Zayd b. Aslam, however, was of the opinion that *asbirū* means to be steadfast in fighting (*'alā 'l-jihād*); *ṣābirū* meant to outdo one's enemies in steadfastness/forbearance ["so that the enemy is not more steadfast than you"], and *rābiṭū* meant that they should undertake to fight their enemies in battle. After considering these exegeses, al-Wāḥidī, like al-Ṭabarī, expresses his opinion that *ribāṭ* here refers to the deployment of horses against enemies at certain frontiers. The duty of *jihād*, he says, consequently acquired the name of *ribāṭ* and *murābaṭa*; he indicates that many exegetes by his time subscribed to this view. Other unnamed exegetes, al-Wāhidī is careful to point out, subscribed to a different understanding, however.[101]

Al-Wāḥidī also records the opinion of the previously mentioned Successor Abū Salama b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who had affirmed to his nephew that there was no military campaign at the time of the Prophet during which people guarded the frontiers; *rābiṭū* must rather mean "waiting steadily for the prayers one after another." Further corroboration is provided by al-Ḥākim Abū 'Abd Allāh (sc. al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, d. 404/1014),[102] who transmitted this report in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. There is also a sound *ḥadīth* from Abū Hurayra in which he related as follows:

> The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Shall I not indicate to you that on account of which God blots out sins and elevates the status [of people]?" They [Companions] replied, "Yes indeed, O Messenger of God." He said, "Ablution in difficult circumstances,

> going frequently to the mosque and waiting for the prayers one after another—that is *ribāṭ* for you, that is *ribāṭ* for you, that is *ribāṭ* for you."[103]

Muslim [b. Ḥajjāj] is also said to have related this *ḥadīth* from Ismā'īl b. Ja'far (d. 180/796),[104] affirming that waiting for the prayers was called *ribāṭ*, for all those who are steadfast in carrying out a command is said to have "devoted [lit. "attached"] his heart to it" (*rabaṭa qalbahu 'alayhi*) and "girded himself" (*rabaṭa nafsahu*) for that purpose.[105]

Despite these proof-texts conscientiously recorded by al-Wāḥidī that stress primarily devotional meanings for *ribāṭ* and its derivatives, this prominent exegete in the fifth/eleventh century understands all three imperatives in Qur'ān 3:200 to refer essentially to steadfastness in battle. His preference clearly establishes for us, once again, the predominance of combative meanings assigned in his day to the lexemes *rābiṭū* and *ribāṭ*.

In the following century, al-Zamakhsharī says that the verse exhorts believers to be steadfast in their religion and its obligations and to be firm with the enemies of God in *jihād*—that is, to surpass them in steadfastness during the trials of battle and to be at least the equal of them in displaying patience and endurance. *Al-muṣābara*, the verbal noun derived from *ṣābara*, is a type of patience/steadfastness that goes beyond ordinary patience, comments al-Zamakhsharī, indicating steadfastness in the face of unusual hardship and severity. *Wa-rābiṭū* means to stand guard on the frontiers on horseback, ever-vigilant and prepared for a military foray (*ghazw*). In corroboration of this understanding, al-Zamakhsharī quotes the verse, "Muster against them all you can of force and tethered horses (*ribāṭ al-khayl*), so as to cast fear upon the enemies of God and of you" (Qur'ān 8:60) and the *ḥadīth*: "Whoever stands guard at the frontier a day and a night in the path of God earns the equivalent of fasting for a month and staying up for prayer at night [during the month], not breaking fast nor desisting from supererogatory prayer except to attend to necessities."[106] Worthy of note is that al-Zamakhsharī is the first commentator to connect Qur'ān 3:200 to Qur'ān 8:60, allowing him to specifically equate *rābiṭu* in the former verse with *ribāṭ al-khayl* in the second, and thus impart a combative meaning to the former. We recollect that even though al-Ṭabari expressed a preference for the opinion that *rābiṭu* referred to the activity of *ribāṭ* (guarding the frontiers), he did not attempt to impose this meaning on this verse by yoking it to Qur'ān 8:60. By al-Zamakhsharī's time in the sixth/twelfth century, the parallel invocation of these two verses is revealing of an exegetical attempt to elide earlier non-combative understandings of *rābiṭū* in Qur'an 3:200 and to explicitly impute military activity to it .

In his interpretation of Qur'ān 3:200, al-Rāzī painstakingly describes the various inflections of patience, necessitated by the fact that human existence is comprised of two spheres: one that has to do with the individual only, and the second that is shared with others. In the first sphere, humans must practice patience and steadfastness (*al-ṣabr*) [in relation to themselves and their duties], whereas in the second, they must practice forbearance (*al-muṣābara*) vis-à-vis others. Patience (*ṣabr*) is of various kinds, continues al-Rāzī. For example, one must have patience in learning the complexities of proofs when acquiring knowledge of God's unity, justice, prophecy, and resurrection, and in undertaking the difficulties inherent in carrying out religious obligations. These various manifestations of patience are subsumed under His command *aṣbirū*.[107]

As for *muṣābara*, it refers to forbearance during unpleasant occurrences between oneself and others. This includes showing forbearance toward members of one's family, neighbors, and relatives when they behave badly. *Muṣābara* also includes refraining from taking revenge on those who cause you harm, as counseled in Qur'ān 7:199: "Turn away from the ignorant." Further included in *muṣābara* is showing a preference and love for the other over oneself, as mentioned in Qur'an 59:9: "They prefer [others] over themselves even when reaping poverty." Thus *muṣābara* also consists of forgiving those who wrong or oppress you (*al-'afu 'amman ẓalamaka*); al-Rāzi references Qur'ān 2:237 here, which states, "Forgiveness is closer to God-conscious piety" (*li-'l-taqwā*). Moreover, *muṣābara* includes commanding good and preventing wrong.[108] Because the one undertaking this duty may face harm, it includes fighting (*al-jihād*) in self-defense. It also involves showing forbearance with the foolish in trying to assuage their doubts and dispel their inclinations toward falsehood. Therefore, *aṣbirū* has to do with the individual, whereas *ṣābirū* deals with interactions between the individual and others.[109]

Al-Rāzī warns, however, that even when practicing patience and forbearance, humans are still subject to the baser aspects of their natures, such as carnal desires, anger, and covetousness, which cause them to lose patience and sacrifice forbearance—hence they are counseled to hold firm (*wa-rābiṭū*). To summarize this rather lengthy section, al-Rāzī says *al-murābaṭa* refers to the effort expended in controlling and suppressing all manner of evil propensities (*al-quwa*) within the human self, and *al-falāḥ* (success) is the end result for those who thereby prefer to please God out of reverence for Him over submission to their base desires.[110]

As for His saying *wa-rābiṭū*, al-Rāzī says that there are two principal ways of understanding it. First, it could be understood as referring to the tethering of horses on the frontier just as the enemy forces do, each prepared to

fight the other. Al-Rāzī references Qur'ān 8:60 here and the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet compares spending a day and night on the frontier to fasting and supererogatory prayers for a month. Second, the meaning of *murābaṭa* is to wait for prayer one after another, which exegesis is supported by the previously-mentioned *ḥadīth* from Abū Salama 'Abd al-Raḥmān in which he said there were no military raids (*ghazw*) requiring *ribāṭ* during the time of the Prophet, and by the *ḥadīth* from Abū Hurayra in which Muḥammad affirms three times that *ribāṭ* means waiting for the prayers in sequence.[111]

Al-Rāzī allows that both of these exegeses are semantically plausible. *Al-ribāṭ* is derived from *al-rabṭ*, which implies firmness (*al-shidd*). Whoever abides by a commandment in patience has resolved his (or her) heart upon it. Others say that *ribāṭ* refers to adherence to something and endurance (*al-luẓūm wa-'l-thabāt*), which meanings may be supported by his previous discussion of *ṣabr* and self-control (*rabṭ al-nafs*). Moreover, this kind of steadfastness and endurance may be displayed during both fighting (*'alā 'l-jihād*) and prayer—"and God knows best!"[112]

Like al-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī affirms that Qur'ān 3:200 encompasses within it much counsel concerning a range of issues—from how to present oneself in this world to the enemy to attaining the felicity of the next world. It urges believers to be steadfast in their obligations and in fighting their base desires, for *ṣabr* is self-restraint. As for *muṣābara*, some said its meaning is to be firm with the enemy, as maintained by Zayd b. Aslam, whereas al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said it means steadfastness in observing the five prayers. Others said it means to persist in acting contrary to the incitements of one's carnal self, "for it beckons and he resists." According to the early scholar Atā' [b. Abī Rabāḥ] (d. 115/733) and the previously mentioned al-Quraẓī, it means to wait patiently for the fulfillment of the promise made to humans [by God] and to not despair subsequently, waiting instead for deliverance and relief (*al-faraj*) [after their hardship]. Abū 'Umar[113] would say, "Waiting for deliverance with patience is an act of worship."[114]

Al-Qurṭubī cites the well-known commentary of Abū Salama that the verb *rābiṭū* refers to waiting for the daily prayers, since the practice of manning the frontiers did not exist during the Prophet's time. Like al-Ṭabarī and other exegetes, al-Qurṭubī notes that Abū Salama had also related the *ḥadīth* in which Muḥammad repeats three times that *ribāṭ* meant waiting for the prayers one after another, and that acts associated with prayer, like ablution under difficult circumstances and going frequently to the mosque, wipe out one's sins.[115]

In contrast to these views, Ibn 'Aṭiyya had asserted that *ribāṭ* primarily means "adhering to the path of God" (*al-mulāzama fī sabīl allāh*) because it is derived from "tethering one's horse" (*min ribāṭ al-khayl*); thus the one who

manned the frontiers of Islam was called a *murābiṭ*, whether on horseback or on foot. The Prophet's statement in reference to prayer, "And that is *ribāṭ* for you," is similar to *ribāṭ* in the path of God, he declared. The grammarian Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. 175/791), "one of the greatest masters and experts of language," continues al-Qurṭubī, had commented that *ribāṭ* refers to manning the frontiers, as well as to the diligent observance of prayers. Upon weighing the evidence, our exegete concludes that *ribāṭ* in the sense of waiting for prayers is to be regarded as the basic linguistic derivation, as affirmed by the Prophet. The common understanding of *murābaṭa* is "to fasten something/tie a knot on something" so that it does not remain loose. This harks back to the idea of steadfastly refraining from something and restraining one's heart through good intentions and one's body in order to perform acts of obedience. Among the greatest and most important of such acts is the tying of the horse in the path of God, as commanded in Qur'ān 8:60, and devoting oneself to prayers, as stated by Muḥammad and related by Abū Hurayra, Jābir, 'Alī, and countless others.[116] Through this line of reasoning, al-Qurṭubī harmonizes the two predominant strands of interpretation concerning this critical verse, without privileging one over the other.[117]

Concluding Remarks

It is clear from our survey that Qur'ān 3:200 is a highly critical verse that allowed commentators from roughly the third/ninth century on to begin to yoke the attributes of patience and forbearance, as encapsulated in *ṣabr* and its derivatives, to *jihād* and its multiple, particularly combative, significations. Early exegetes from the first three centuries of Islam uniformly emphasized that *ṣabr* and its derivatives referred to patience and forbearance in the carrying out of general religious duties, particularly under adverse conditions; and that the Qur'anic *rābiṭū* counseled the faithful to exhibit firmness under such conditions, particularly in unwavering observance of the daily prayers. It is in al-Ṭabarī's commentary, not surprisingly, that we first observe that both *ṣabr* and *ribāṭ*, while retaining these early connotations, become conjoined to the combative *jihād* and specifically to military vigilance on the frontiers. The source of this interpretation was the Medinan Zayd b. Aslam, whose pro-Umayyad sympathies are well-known and who frequently served as advisor to the Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd b. Yazīd on legal matters.[118] Like his son Ibn Zayd, he often expressed belligerent views on *jihād* and was regarded as a very weak (*ḍa'īf jiddan*) transmitter by Ibn Sa'd, for example.[119] It is here that we may well detect the impetus—in the context of belligerent Umayyad-Byzantine relations—for the importation of the verb *rābiṭu* into the Umayyad military lexicon to

describe armed vigilance on the frontiers. Equating the patient anticipation of the daily prayers with stoic vigilance against the enemy at the borders conferred the much-needed veneer of a religiously mandated activity upon the latter. As our survey reveals, other Ḥijāzī authorities like Abū Salama b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān not known to have harbored strong affection for the Umayyads resolutely upheld the non-combative significations of *rbṭ* and its derivatives.[120] It is noteworthy that al-Rāzī in the late sixth/twelfth century and al-Qurṭubī in the seventh/thirteenth century re-emphasized the non-combative pious and spiritual significations of the derivatives of *rbṭ* and expounded more expansively on their merits, while acknowledging that *ribāṭ* had also come to mean the manning of frontiers on horseback.[121] We cannot therefore assume a steady linear progression from non-combative to combative meanings for these two terms from the first century of Islam to the sixth; instead, we observe a frequent shifting in their valences.

To continue our delineation of the expanding semantic landscape of *jihād*, we must now turn our attention to the combative component (*qitāl*) that came to be included within the umbrella term *jihād*. The questions we must ask are when, where, why, and how did *qitāl* become a required component of striving in the path of God, according to the Qurʾān and its interpreters? In the following chapter, we take a close look at the exegeses of critical verses that deal with the necessity of fighting under certain conditions as a religious duty imposed upon believers.